

Military personnel and their families get free tax help!

The military is one of our strongest partners in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program. The Armed Forces Tax Council (AFTC) consists of the tax program coordinators for the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The AFTC oversees the operation of the military tax programs worldwide, and serves as the main conduit for outreach by the IRS to military personnel and their families.

Marines, airmen, soldiers, sailors, and guardsmen, and their families' worldwide get tax preparation help at offices within their installations. These VITA sites provide free tax advice, tax preparation, and assistance to military members and their families. They are trained and equipped to address military specific tax issues, such as [combat zone](#) benefits and the effect of the new [Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](#) guidelines. The

military tax programs generated over 400,000 electronic 2002 federal income tax returns.

Commanders support the program by detailing service members to prepare returns and by providing space and equipment for tax centers. The IRS supports these efforts by providing tax software and by training service members to prepare taxes at the military sites.

Most service members file their tax returns electronically at their tax centers and, by selecting direct deposit, receive their refunds in as little as one week. This combined effort ensures that service members receive free tax assistance from well-trained and equipped military tax preparers. Visit www.irs.gov for information about filing tax online and about file extensions or visit your local VITA representative.

Interest-free loans reduce college costs

With rising college costs, interest-free loans can be a blessing for a parent with children in college. The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is offering a \$3,000 interest-free loan to the children of active-duty service members.

“Anyway to help further education is great,” said Vicki J. Wilson, office manager of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. “It’s a great opportunity for service

members and their children.”

The Vice Adm. E. P. Travers Scholarship and Loan Program provides financial assistance for full-time undergraduate students and is based on a financial need. To be eligible for the loan the applicant must be the child of active-duty Navy or Marine Corps personnel, possess a military identification card, be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a full-time

student in a post-secondary institution approved by the U.S. Department of Education. The applicant must have or maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.

A loan from the Travers Program is for one academic year, and must be renewed every year, according to www.nmcra.org. For more information contact NCMRS at 451-5346 or education@hq.nmcra.org.